

The listing of claims presented below replaces all prior versions and listing of claims in the application.

Listing of claims:

1. (Currently amended) A process for the preparation of expanded millet or sorghum , the process comprising;
 - a. equilibrating millet or sorghum grains to ~~optimum~~ a moisture content of 15 - 35% by adding additional water and tempering or resting in order to impart pseudo-elastic texture to decorticated millet or sorghum endosperm,
 - b. loosening intracellular intactness of the endosperm by mechanical means without developing fissures to obtain bumped millet or sorghum,
 - c. drying the bumped millet or sorghum to a moisture level of 10 - 20% ~~optimum level for puffing~~,
 - d. grading the millet or sorghum obtained in step (c) to obtain millet grains with a thickness of 0.8 - 1.0mm and diameter 1.5 - 1.6 mm ~~near uniform size~~ by screening through appropriate sieves or screens,
 - e. subjecting the grains to high temperature short time treatment at 200 -250°C for 15 - 45 seconds in salt, sand or air or such other heat transfer media to prepare expanded millet or sorghum .
2. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein step (a) above is carried out on hydrothermally treated and decorticated finger millet.
3. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the decorticated millet is equilibrated to 15- 35% moisture level and subjected to bumping or flattening to 0.7-1. 0 mm thickness and 1. 5-1. 6 mm diameter, mechanically or manually, without causing visible cracks.
4. (Canceled)
5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the expanded millet prepared is pre-cooked to provide 95-100% carbohydrate digestibility.
7. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the millet is selected from the group consisting of finger millet, pearl millet, sorghum and minor millets containing fully or partially gelatinized starch.
8. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the bumped grains are subjected to high temperature short time treatment in sand or salt, ~~heated to 200-250 °C for 30-40 sec and the sand or salt sieved off immediately, or air heated to 180-200 °C or in a gun popper or fluidized bed dryer, microwave and infra red heaters.~~
9. (Withdrawn) Expanded millet when prepared by the process of claim 1 for use as a ready-to-eat snack, supplementary food, alone or in combination with other edible cereals, pulses, oil seeds, fruits and vegetables, and as an ingredient in confectionery.
10. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the expanded millet is freed from adhering heat transfer media by brushing or aspiration.
11. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the expanded millet obtained is free from seed born microflora.
12. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the expansion ratio of the puffed grains is in the range from 5 to 8 times of its original volume and is effected without loss of it's the grain's original spherical shape and with ~~smooth glossy surface, a~~ crispy ~~and spongy~~ texture.
13. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the expanded millet contains 4-8% protein, 1-1.5% fat, 13-16% dietary fiber with 98% carbohydrate digestibility.
14. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the expanded millet is coated with an edible[[,]] fruit or edible vegetable powder, ~~sweetening~~ or edible agent selected from the group consisting of sugar, malt powder, malt extract, and edible colors.